



Dear friends and neighbors of Whatcom County,

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly changed the world around us. It's disrupted our way of life and rapidly created new realities for each of us. It's understandable to find it all unsettling and concerning.

First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge our caregivers—both at the bedside and behind the scenes—for their unfaltering dedication to providing safe, compassionate care, 24/7, even in times of great hardship. They are the true healthcare heroes.

On behalf of PeaceHealth, I want to assure you that we are working purposefully to promote the health and safety of our patients, caregivers and community members during this difficult time.

Here are some of the steps we've taken to ensure we are prepared to meet the anticipated surge in COVID-19 patients:

- Restricted visitors and non-essential individuals who enter the medical center to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Implemented temperature screens for anyone entering our buildings. Those with a temperature or other COVID-19-related symptoms are turned away, including employees.
- Cancelled or postponed all elective procedures to conserve hospital resources for critically ill patients and curb the spread of the virus by limiting the number of otherwise healthy people in our facility.
- Worked in collaboration with Whatcom Unified Command other local healthcare providers to initiate a communitywide response to the anticipated surge in the number of COVID-19 patients needing hospitalization, including combining resources to meet the growing need for supplies.
- Readied internal areas to triage larger numbers of COVID-19 patients because ED and hospital volumes have declined. We have the capability to erect external triaging areas, i.e., tents, should volumes exceed our internal capacity.
- Implemented a Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) conservation plan to ensure that we are adequately stocked with the resources our caregivers need to remain safe.

We continue to be limited in our ability to test people for the virus. There are inadequate numbers of test kits and test analyzing capabilities nationwide, and we are trying to identify new sources of both.

The COVID-19 situation changes quickly, often by the hour, and we will continue to swiftly make changes and adapt as it develops

We know that many of you are sending us your support, and we can feel it. We've been moved by the outpouring of generous offers to help us with maintaining our PPE supply—whether by sewing surgical masks, donating unopened boxes of N95 masks or simply asking how to be of service. Please email StJosephSupply@peacehealth.org if you wish to donate. And thank you.

We are all in this together. We value the trust you place in us to navigate these challenging times, and we are honored to care for this community.

--Charles Prosper, Chief Executive, Northwest network, PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center